

T W O
S E R M O N S:

The FIRST Preach'd before
King C H A R L E S II.

F E B R U A R Y 10. 1678.

U P O N T H E
Providence of G O D in the Government
of the World.

The S E C O N D upon
Charity, proving without it there is no ob-
taining the Love of G O D.

By Z A C H A R Y C R A D O C K, D. D. *K*
Late Provost of E A T O N.

Publiſh'd by His Majesty's Special Command.

These Sermons are an excellent Preservative against the Growth of Deism and Immorality in the present Age; and are what no Family ought to be without, in order to implant in the Minds of Youth a just Idea of Almighty God, his Providence, &c. They are in such great Esteem among the Judicious (for elegant Stile and strong Reasoning) as when scarce to have been sold for Five Shillings each.

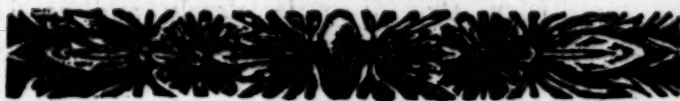
L O N D O N:

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N. B. *These Discourses are all the learned Author ever printed of his Works.*





ECCLES. IX. 2.

*There is one Event to the Righteous
and to the Wicked.*

THE Argument of the *Epicureans* against Providence, agrees well with their Doctrine concerning the Beginning of the World, and is every whit as foolish and unreasonable.

They tell us, that such an Attendance upon the Works of Nature and the Actions of Men, as Providence implies, is too mean for God's supreme Greatness, and too troublesome for his complete Happiness; that his Enjoyments and Satisfaction would be interrupted with his Cares; that he must be wearied with the endless Continuance, and distracted with the infinite Variety of them; that Men are too inconsiderable, for him to regard what they do; that he is so far from being concerned, from being either pleased or angry with them, that he is not so much as a Spectator of their Actions; worshipping or blaspheming him, doing right or wrong one to another, is all alike; nothing can move him to take Notice, much less to interpose or meddle to do them either Good or Harm. This Kind of Reasoning was justly despised for the Weakness of it, and justly suspected to be rather a crafty Insinuation of Atheism, and a Pursuance of their Design

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against

against Religion, than a Way of good and conclusive Arguing, even in their own Opinion.

How could Men, that discourse clearly and consistently in many other Matters, fall into such a gross Mistake, as to conclude concerning the Nature of God, which is infinitely perfect, from the Defects and Imperfections of a Man?

Because we cannot attend long, nor to many Things at once, but are tired with thinking, and perplexed with Doubts, wavering and uncertain to resolve, erring in the Choice of our End, and, when that is well chosen, easily bewildered and lost in our Way: Therefore Infinite Knowledge and Almighty Power must be liable to the same Inconveniences with our Ignorance and Weakness.

Plainly to repeat such an Argument, is enough for the Answer of it.

The more usual Objection against Providence is more difficult, which all that have treated upon that Subject, have thought worthy of a very serious Consideration.

If God govern the World, how come Things to pass so unlikely to be suffered by infallible Wisdom and Justice?

What Rule is it by which he distributes good and evil Things?

How must we defend his Goodness, when the Righteous are in Adversity, and the Wicked prosper?

Why do not Things befall Men according to their Works; but oftentimes *there be just Men unto whom it happeneth according to the Work of the Wicked; again, there be wicked Men to whom it happeneth according to the Work of the Righteous?* Eccles. viii. 14. How come all Things alike unto all, one Event to the Righteous and to the Unclean; to him that sacrificeth, and to him that sacrificeth not? *As is the good, so is the Sinner; and he that sweareth, as he that feareth an Oath.*

It is no Wonder that these should be hard Questions to them who knew nothing certainly of Rewards and Punishments after Death.

But it would seem strange, that they who were better instructed by Revelation, should be at a Stand sometimes, and doubtful what to resolve; if every Day's Experience did not teach us how apt even wise Men are to hearken to the Suggestions of Passion against Reason, and to break out into hasty Expressions, contrary to their habitual Persuasion.

Job complains, Wherefore do the Wicked live, become old, ye are mighty in Power? Their Houses are safe from Fear, neither is the Rod of God upon them, Job xxi. 7, 9.

David saith of himself, I was envious at the Foolish, when I saw the Prosperity of the Wicked. They are not in Trouble as other Men; neither are they plagued like other Men, Psal. lxxiii. 3, 5.

He was ready to conclude that he had been a good Man to no Purpose. *Verily, I have cleansed my Heart in vain, and washed my Hands in Innocence. For all the Day long I have been plagued, and chastened every Morning, Vers. 13, 14.*

They were tempted to a prophane Misbelief; their Thoughts were discomposed for a little while, but presently settled again; as appears in the Process of their Discourses, in which they recover into the Way of Reasoning aright concerning these Things, and answer their own Objections.

Solomon calls this an Evil under the Sun, that there is one Event to all: Eccles. ix. 3. Not that he either doubts of or blames God's Providence, but the great Evil spoken of is the Evil of Mens foolish Construction and false Consequence, mentioned in the Words following; *Yea, also the Heart of the Sons of Men is full of Evil, and Madnes is in their Hearts while they live.* This seems to be the same Effect of the same Cause which are plainly described, *Eccles. viii. 11. Because Sentence against an evil Work is not executed*

speedily, therefore the Heart of the Sons of Men is fully set to do Evil.

But whatever those Men, who would by all Means discharge themselves of the Fear of God, may be forward to infer from this Uncertainty of Events, either that there is no Providence, or, that God is unconcerned whether Men be just or unjust; it will appear, when the whole Matter is laid together, that their Inference is rash and ill-grounded; that Reason, as well as Religion, is against them; that this Order in the Government of the World is necessary to the Wisdom, and consistent with the Justice of God, and with his Goodness too, and with *David's* Testimony concerning him, *Psal. xi. 7. The righteous Lord loveth Righteousness, his Countenance doth behold the Upright.*

There is indeed very often one Event of Health and Sickness, Riches and Poverty, Peace and War, Victory and Defeat, to the Righteous and to the Wicked, of which common Observation is Proof enough, without the Authority of the Scripture: But this is no Argument against Providence, as it will appear, if these three Things be considered.

I. That for the same Things uncertainly and indifferently to befall the Righteous and the Wicked in this Life, is unavoidably necessary.

II. That they who from thence object against Providence, are no competent Judges in the Case, and suppose in their Objection that which is false.

III. That, however, the Day of Judgment is a sufficient Answer to their Objection.

I. For the same Things uncertainly and indifferently to befall the Righteous and the Wicked in this Life, is unavoidably necessary.

If Prosperity and Affliction were the certain Effects of God's Love and Hatred, the constant Marks of his Favour and Displeasure, it would be impossible to reconcile

concile what we see every Day, with what we are taught to believe. But Prosperity and Affliction have other Causes, and there is a Necessity of their happening uncertainly, *one Event to the Righteous and to the Wicked*, as well from the Nature of Men, as from their Relations and mutual Dependencies, and from the Order of this Life to the next as a State of Probation. This Necessity will be evident, if we consider,

1. There must be *one Event to the Righteous and to the Wicked*, because Men have the same Dominion over their own Actions, and do that which themselves chuse to do.

The Fire and Hail, the Ice and Snow fulfil the Will of God, the Plants flourish and wither, and the Seasons change, and the Heavenly Bodies move exactly according to the Intention and Design of their Maker, not by any Sense or Knowledge in them, but by a Necessity of Nature: But Man is endued with Knowledge, and must fulfil the Will of God in another Way, as directed by a Rule, and persuaded by sufficient Motives; not constrained by Almighty Power, as the mechanical World, but submitting freely to the sovereign Authority of God, who hath shewed him the End of his Creation, and expects from him a reasonable Service, and hath set before him Good and Evil, Life and Death, that he may chuse either Obedience and its Reward, or Sin and its Punishment.

This is Man's Nature, and God's Way of governing it. And tho' sometimes he changes the Hearts of Men, alters their Inclinations, makes them chuse and resolve as it seems expedient to him, by an Influence on their Understanding and Will, which they neither discern nor can resist; yet the Reason of this Argument is still the same, because this secret and effectual Operation of God doth not take away the Natural Liberty of Man's Will, but only over-rule and determine it in some particular Cases. In others he leaves Men to themselves. He commands them to worship him, and suffers them to worship Idols; he requires them to be ob-

dient to Superiors, and just to one another, and permits them to be guilty of Disobedience, Rebellion, Murder, Adultery, Robbery, False Witness and all the Malice and Fraud, and violent perverting of Judgment and Justice that Men are tempted to by Ambition and Covetousness.

Since therefore a great Part of Mens Calamities happens to them by the Wickedness of their Neighbours, and Wealth and Greatness oftentimes are procured by their own Wickedness and Usurpation, which though God disapproves and strictly forbids, and declares that he will punish, yet, if he doth not interpose his irresistible Power to hinder, it evidently follows, that the Sin of the Oppressor may make him rich and prosperous, and the innocent oppressed Man poor and afflicted; and that these Things must fall out as uncertainly as we see they do, because they depend upon so uncertain a Thing as the Will of Man.

2. There must be *one Event to the Righteous and to the Wicked*, because a great deal of Prosperity and Affliction befalls Men, not as the Reward or the Effect of any Thing done by themselves, but by Descent from their Parents, whose Virtues and Vices have great Influence upon the Persons and Fortunes of their Children, by the Providence of God, and by the Laws of Men, and by the Course of Nature.

First, Prosperity or Affliction happens to the Children from the Obedience or Sin of the Parents by the Providence of God, according to this declared and oft repeated Rule, *That he visits the Iniquity of the Fathers upon the Children unto the third and fourth Generation of them that hate him; and sheweth Mercy unto thousands of them that love him and keep his Commandments*, Exod. xx. 5, 6. and xxxiv. 7. Deut. v. 9, 10. Jer. xxxii. 18.

Of this there are many Examples in the Scripture, not only when Children imitate the Sin of their Parents, as for Instance, when they commit Idolatry, and worship the false Gods of their Fathers; or, when they partake in their Guilt, in keeping that which to their

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Knowledge was got by Fraud and Oppression ; or, when they inherit Estates with a Curse for the Injustice and Extortion with which they were raised, though that Injustice and Extortion be unknown to them, in which Case the Estate may be found guilty, and the Owner acquitted.

Besides all these Cases, we find the innocent Children suffering for the Sins of their Forefathers.

Some think it very difficult to make out the Justice of this Proceeding.

But the Sovereignty of God signifies little if it will not serve to defend his Justice, in making Men rich or poor, live long or die soon ; if it be not a satisfactory Account for such Things, that the supreme Lord gave and took away.

But this Way and Method of Providence may be also defended from the Usefulness of it to restrain Men that believe from the Commission of Sin, especially those gross and crying Sins for which the Sinner shall not be punished in his Person only, but also in the Calamities and Destruction of his Posterity.

Thus the Wisdom of God provides, that the Antidote shall grow upon the same Root from which the Poison springs, that the Remedy against the most dangerous Temptations shall be found in the same Affection from whence the Temptation arises.

Nothing doth more generally and powerfully and constantly affect Men, then the Concerns of their Children : For their Sakes they will embitter their whole Life with continual Cares, patiently undergo the most slavish Drudgeries, be guilty of the vilest Actions, do any Thing, and endure any Thing, to leave their Posterity more Wealth and an higher Place ; and yet, if some of them may be believed, they desire neither Riches nor Honour for themselves : They talk of the World like Philosophers ; a little is enough for all the Necessities and all the Delights of Nature ; a retired Life is the most pleasant and the most secure ; to sit always at a Feast is but to be always tempted to Surfeits,
and

and from numerous Attendance there is more Trouble and Danger than useful Service.

Now if the Desire to leave their Posterity great makes this fine Talk signify nothing, and forces them notwithstanding into all the Troubles, and Dangers, and Temptations to which covetous and ambitious Men are exposed; let them consider this Way of Providence, and if they believe it, it will cure them of that diseased Temper of Mind for which their Philosophy, though true, proves an insufficient Remedy; they will be convinced, that a little left to their Children, with all the Blessings that attend upon Religion and Faithfulness, and Justice and Charity, is a better Inheritance than the greatest Fortunes with a Curse; that the biggest Heap of Treasure is but a poor Provision, if, whilst the Father lays up the Gains of Oppression, *God lays up his Iniquity for his Children*, Job xxi. 10.

Secondly, Prosperity or Affliction happens to the Children from the Virtues or Sins of the Parents by the Laws of Men. A Man sees himself entering into Possession of the Honour and Wealth of his Ancestors, and rejoices in the Blessings of his Family which he was born to inherit: But suddenly he finds his Condition changed, the Descent of the Honour of his House intercepted, and the Estate confiscated, and the Blood tainted; and all this, not for his own Sin, but for the Sin of his Father. This Proceeding of the Law is prudent, because many Men are so desperate, that no Consideration of themselves can restrain them from Mischief, and yet such Men are afraid to ruin their Posterity, and, by that Fear, are withheld from the greatest Mischief. And this Proceeding is not only prudent but just, because the Reason of the publick Good hath a Title in all Mens Honours and Estates antecedent and superior to their private Right, and reserved either implicitly or expressly in the Laws of all Nations.

There is another Consideration of human Laws in this Argument of Prosperity or Affliction by Descent, *viz.* That Laws make not a Man's Virtue his Title
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to his Estate, but Inheritance, or Gift, or Purchase, or any just Way of acquiring it; nor doth a Man forfeit what he hath by the most common Vices; so that a foolish and riotous Heir of a provident Father justly possesses that Wealth and Plenty which he abuses, and surfeits upon, and wastes prodigally till it be all gone, and leaves perhaps to a wife and good Son all the Calamities of Poverty, and more; for mere Poverty is not so great an Affliction, as Poverty after Riches, and Want after Abundance.

To conclude, there is a Descent of Good and Evil by the Course of Nature. A riotous Man may have received from his temperate and healthful Parents such a vigorous and firm Constitution as will endure great, and long and frequent Debauches before it be quite broken, and this Man's sober and temperate Son, notwithstanding all his Care and good Government of himself, may be sick for those Debauches, and feel those Pains and Aches which his Father's Excess deserved; for in this Sense too, *the Iniquity of the Fathers is visited upon the Children.*

Now if Parents, being evil themselves, may have good Children, and, being good themselves, may have evil Children, and may have Children like themselves, whether they be good or evil, and yet Prosperity or Affliction shall befall these Children by the Actions of their Parents; it must necessarily follow, that these Things are uncertain, and that there must be *one Event to the Righteous and to the Wicked.*

3. There must be *one Event to the Righteous and to the Wicked*, because they are so mixt together in their Persons, and Interests, and Employments, and Places of Abode, that they cannot be distinguished in the Events that befall them. They march and fight in the same Army, and fare alike in Danger or Safety, Abundance or Famine, Conquest or Defeat. They live together in the City, and must breath in the same wholesome or infected Air. They sail in the same Ships, and the Hazards of the Sea, Storms or good Weather, fair or cross Winds,

Winds, a safe Arrival or Shipwreck are alike for them both. They eat of the delicious or coarse Fare, the plentiful or scarce Provision, at the same Table.

Good and bad Men are mixed in the World as the Tares and the Wheat in the Parable: If you will have the Wheat grow, the Tares must grow too; if you will pull up the Tares, the Roots are entangled, and the Wheat must come up with it; they cannot be parted till the Harvest; then the Wheat must be gathered into the Barn by itself, and the Tares burnt. So shall the Good and Bad, who must for a while live together, and take Part one with another in such Things as happen, be for ever divided at the *Resurrection of the Dead*.

Then the believing Husband and the unbelieving Wife, the religious Parents and the ungracious Children, the just Magistrate and the seditious and unruly People, the good and charitable Man and his envious and malicious Neighbour, who could not be separated in many of the Blessings and Calamities of Life, shall now for ever be separated, to be happy or miserable alone by themselves.

But whilst they live here, they must share one in another's Fortune, and enjoy the same Prosperity, or suffer the same Affliction together.

4. There must be *one Event to the Righteous and to the Wicked*, for the more evident and certain distinguishing of them one from another.

The Devil's Insinuation against Job's Integrity would have been unanswerable if it had been true, *viz.* That his Service of God was for the World's Sake, that his Love would be changed into Despight, and his Prayers into Cursing, if he were afflicted. But his Behaviour in the greatest Affliction that ever beset a mere Man was an undeniable Proof of his Sincerity. Those in whom the Love of the World is the ruling Affection, as the Case now stands, trouble not themselves much about Religion or Justice. Virtue sometimes helps a little, but more often hinders them from obtaining their End; at least they think so; Yet these Men would be very devout

vout and precise, if by such Means they might be rich and great, and enjoy all Manner of Pleasure, and have Satisfaction to all their Desires. The Men to whom Gain is better than Godliness, would not be Extortioners if more were to be gotten by Justice: They would not be cruel and without Compassion to the Poor, if they believed that their Wealth would increase by what they gave away: They would not send their Adventures, to *Arabia* and *India* if they could have a better Market at Home; if building the Temple, and giving liberally to the Altar would return their Stock with more Profit. If Religion were now become the only Way for the Proud to be advanced, and for the Voluptuous to be filled with sensual Delights, and for the Spiteful to be revenged, what a Change would there suddenly be in the Manners of wicked Men! How reformed would they seem? Very good in outward Appearance, and yet as bad as ever; in a Garb indeed of Religion, but deceiving themselves as well as others with a Disguise; *having a Form of Godliness, but denying the Power; being all the while in the Gall of Bitterness, and in the Bonds of Iniquity; Lovers of Pleasure more than Lovers of God; having their Hearts full of all the Abominations of Pride, and the Idolatry of Covetousness.*

Flatterers pretend to be, and sometimes think themselves, sincere and faithful Friends; but when the Man whom they love so passionately is falling, and they get as far off as they can from the Ruins of his Greatness, then at last they find out the Mystery, if they knew it not before; that all their fond and officious Service was not Respect to him, but themselves; that they did not love his Person but his Fortune, his Gifts, and the Benefits they hoped to receive from his Power.

Such a Discovery doth this Way of Providence make. Since *there is one Event to the Righteous and to the Wicked*: Since Men are poor and despised, notwithstanding their Justice and Religion, and, as it sometimes happens, the poorer and the more despised for their Sake; the Men, who care for Nothing but this World's Good,

Good, will be unjust, and faithless, and unthankful and perjur'd if it will serve their Turn better. *They will say unto God, depart from us, for we desire not the Knowledge of thy Ways. What is the Almighty, that we should serve him? And what Profit should we have, if we pray unto him.* Job. xxi. 14, 15.

That which would have been Hypocrisy, if Religion would have done their Business, will be Prophaneness, if it will not. That which would have been the secret Wickedness of the most close and retired Thoughts, scarce reflected on by him that thinks it, will now be the open Wickedness of Word and Deed. The Man will be known to the World that would have been unknown to himself. He will be thus much nearer to Repentance, that he cannot be deceived in himself, and think he needs it not.

On the other Side, if a Man will be religious and just, tho' he be never so great a Loser by it, if he will hold fast his Integrity in Riches and Poverty, in Honour and Disgrace, in good and evil Report, when he is advanced, and when he is persecuted for Righteousness Sake; this will be a Demonstration that he fears and loves God above all, that the Laws of God are the Rules of his Life, that he makes it his Business to be saved, that his Religion and Worship is not for worldly Respects, and that his good Actions are not perverted and changed into Sins by corrupt Ends and Motives.

The Sum of all these Particulars is, that many of the good and evil Things of this Life happen to Men by the Justice or Injustice of their Neighbours, who have Free-will, and though they are forbidden under severe Penalties, yet they are not irresistibly restrained from doing Injury; that Men are prosperous or afflicted by the Virtues or Vices of their Parents; that the Good and Bad are so mixt that they cannot in many Cases but fare alike; and that the Distinction betwixt the Good and the Bad is thereby made much more evident and undeniable; and therefore there must be *one Event to the Righteous and to the Wicked.*

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But for a farther Answer, all is not true that is implied in this Objection. For,

II. It will appear, that they who make this Objection against Providence are no competent Judges of that which their Objection supposes.

It is supposed in this Objection that the Righteous endure so much Grief, and the Wicked enjoy so much Pleasure, as cannot consist with God's Love to the Righteous, and Anger at the Wicked, if he take notice and be concerned in that which happens.

The better to judge of this Supposition, let two Things be considered. 1. That by the outward Estate of Men we know very little of their present Grief or Pleasure, we cannot infer from thence which is the good and which is the bad Condition.

1. By the outward Estate of Men we know very little of their present Grief or Pleasure. That's a secret Thing, and depends upon hidden Causes, most of all upon those prevailing Affections that take up and employ their Thoughts.

It is visible who hath Lands and great Houses, and who hath none, who is followed by a long Train and receives the Respects and the Compliments, and who may go whither he will without any Notice; but which of these two enjoys himself best, and lives most at Ease, is still a Question, which they, who resolve by what they see, are likely to be mistaken in their Resolution, to misplace their Envy and Pity, to envy the Men that are miserable in all their great Pomp and State, and to pity them who are happy in their Obscurity; to judge unrighteous Judgment, because they judge by outward Appearance.

Scripture, and Reason, and Experience teach us, that good Men have the most true Delight both in Prosperity and Affliction; *that they have great Peace who love God's Law, and nothing can offend them.* Psal. cxix. 165.

In Prosperity there are many Things contribute to and improve the Joy of the Good : A quiet Conscience, Trust, in God, Moderation, Humility, Prudence and Temperance, and Justice and Fortitude, which are such Things that Men can have nothing more profitable in their Life, Wisd. viii. 7.

In ordinary Calamity, such as Sicknefs, Losses, &c. the Righteous have great Relief and Ease from their Repentance and Prayers, and endeavour to make a Benefit of their Cross, and humble Resignation and Submission to God, and their Belief concerning the Wisdom and Goodness of his Providence ; but if they be persecuted for Righteousness Sake ; if the Apostles and Martyrs suffer for the Confession of *Christ*, it may be a Calamity in the Judgment of their Persecutors, but to their own Sense it is a State of Joy and Triumph. *Christ* tells his Disciples, *In the World ye shall have Tribulation, but in me ye shall have Peace. Rejoice and be exceeding glad, for great is your Reward in Heaven. These Things have I spoken, that my Joy might remain in you, and that your Joy might be full.* St. Paul exhorts them, *Rejoice in the Lord always. Be careful for nothing, but in every Thing by Prayer and Supplication, with Thanksgiving let your Requests be made known unto God ; and the Peace of God, which passeth all Understanding, shall keep your Hearts and Minds, through Christ Jesus. Rejoice evermore ; in every Thing give Thanks.* He gives an Account of himself when he was going to his Martyrdom not like a Man overpressed with Grief, *I am now ready to be offered, and the Time of my Departure is at Hand. I have fought a good Fight, I have finished my Course, I have kept the Faith.* Henceforth there is laid up for me a Crown of Righteousness, which the Lord the righteous Judge, shall give me at that Day, 2 Tim. iv. 6, 7, 8. They were imprisoned, and scourged, and banished, and killed all the Day long, yet full of Consolation. *They were troubled on every Side, but not distressed ; perplexed, but not in Despair ; persecuted, but*

but not forsaken ; cast down, but not destroyed ; sorrowful, yet always rejoicing ; having nothing, and yet possessing all Things. They suffered all that malicious Men in Power could do, *but they were strengthened with all Might unto all Patience and Long-suffering with Joyfulness.* They were thought to be in great Misery, by those who could look no farther than the outward Appearance ; but all that while they had the mighty Support of Faith and Hope, the strong Consolations of Grace and the Holy Spirit, *St. Stephen's Vision, Heaven opened, and Jesus standing on the Right Hand of God ;* into whose Presence, where there is Fulness of Joy, they should make so much the more Haste, by how much the sharper their Sufferings were.

On the other Side, Men magnify the Prosperity of the Rich, let them be never so bad, and *they call the Proud, happy ;* but the Account will be another Thing, if the Abatements be deducted. Their Pleasures are short, a Blaze, *the Crackling of Thorns under a Pot,* often interrupted, not by unlucky Accidents only, but most of all by their own unruly Passions ; which are so many Vipers, always breeding within them, and gnawing through their Bowels. *The Wicked are like the troubled Sea when it cannot rest, whose Waters cast up Mire and Dirt. There is no Peace, saith my God, to the Wicked, Isa. lvii. 20, 21.* What Peace can they have who entertain such Enemies to Peace within themselves ? Pride, Scornfulness, Envy, Vain-glory, foolish Hope, insatiable Desire ; whose Enjoyments are easily corrupted with Discontent ; who despise their own Success in Things of the greatest Value, if they be disappointed in a Trifle ; whose Pleasures are often purchased with long and sharp Pains, that tread upon the Heels of them. And altho' Conscience seems to give them but little Trouble, to be either reconciled to what they do, or fast asleep, and to observe nothing ; yet every now and then it *scares them with Dreams, and terrifies them with Visions,* and upon some surprising
C 2 Accident

Accident will be apt to start of a sudden, and awake in a great Affright, and will not without much ado be pacified and laid to Sleep again.

This is very often the Inside of that gawdy Shew that the Prosperity of the Wicked makes. Their Afflictions are not so apt to deceive the Standers-by; there it is easy to see how their Sins and unmortified Lusts, and evil Conscience, increase their Torment: They have used Religion too ill to expect any Relief from thence; they know not how to make God their Refuge; they are, it may be, too stubborn and desperate to pray at all, or too guilty to pray with any Confidence; their Pride and Haughtiness makes them more impatient; they break their Teeth with biting the Chain; they struggle with that which is too strong for them; they can neither cast off nor bear their Burthen; they have no Patience, because they have *no Hope, and are without God in the World.*

The Sum of this Consideration is, That whatever the Condition of Men be, high or low, rich or poor, Solomon's Observation will be found true, that *God giveth to a Man that is good in his Sight, Wisdom, and Knowledge, and Joy, but to the Sinner he giveth Travel*, Eccles. ii. 26. And therefore they who conclude of Mens present Grief or Pleasure by their outward Estate, are incompetent Judges, and mistake the Matter.

But supposing their Judgment concerning Mens present Estate were true, and the Calamities were as grievous, and the Pleasures as entire and perfect as they seem: Yet,

2. From the Knowledge of Mens present Grief or Pleasure, we cannot infer which is the good, and which is the bad Condition.

When the Effect of Mens Fortunes upon their Minds and Manners is seen, how a lasting Contentment is obtained or lost; how the Happiness of another Life is secured or neglected; then, and not till then,

then, a certain Judgment may be made. Now, upon Enquiry, it will be found, that in these Respects both Conditions prove an Advantage to the Good by their good Use, and a Mischief to the Wicked by their Abuse of them.

The Righteous in Authority encourage and countenance the Good, relieve the Oppressed, *break the Jaws of the Wicked, and pluck the Spoil out of their Teeth*, Job xxix. 17. and by their Justice and Temperance, and Reverence to God and to holy Things, bring Religion and Virtue into more Esteem, and do as much as in them lies to convert Sinners. However, they are such a Check and Restraint upon them, that their wicked Disposition cannot so openly and boldly discover itself as it would, if they were let alone, both in doing Wrong, and enticing others to do the same Sins which they commit.

When the Righteous abound in Wealth, *they make to themselves Friends of the unrighteous Mammon*; they give Alms, feed the Hungry, cloath the Naked, visit the Fatherless, and the Widow in their Distress; watch and pray, lest Luxury, or Pride, or Prophaneness, or Uncharitableness, should turn their temporal Blessings into Plagues and Curses; they trust not in uncertain Riches, but in the living God, whose Gifts they receive with Thankfulness and Fear; they do good, and are rich in good Works as well as great Possessions; *ready to distribute, willing to communicate; laying up in Store for themselves a good Foundation against the Time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal Life*, 1 Tim. vi. 18, 19.

The Wicked may be in the same Prosperity, but with another Behaviour. The worse they are, the more they will be tempted and ensnared; they which were proud and vain before, will be insensibly led away into more Pride, and more Vanity, forgetful of him who made the Difference, easily abused into monstrous Conceits of themselves, and the most unjust Com-

parisons of themselves with others ; softened so much with Delight, that they will be able to endure nothing that is cross to their Will and Humour, setting no Bounds to their Enjoyments, impatient of having their present Pleasures allayed with Consideration of the future, with the Fear of God, or the Remembrance of Death ; which notwithstanding comes on apace, somewhat the faster it may be, by reason of their Pleasures, and, if they take no better Care, will surprize them altogether unprepared for the Change of their pleasant Life (if it were granted to be so) into Sickneſs and Languishing, and the Expectation of Death, and the Day of Judgment.

The Difference is no less in the Afflictions that befall the Righteous and the Wicked together : For the Wicked, if they continue impenitent, will grow worse and worse, envious, and malicious, and sullen, and farther from seeking to God than in their Prosperity ; but the same Condition shall be to the Good a Monitor to examine themselves, to search and try their Ways, and be very exact in their Reformation, to enquire out and amend their smallest Faults, of which in their better Estate they took little Notice, and contented themselves with being kept back from presumptuous Sins ; to renew, and confirm, and strengthen their good Resolutions, which even lawful, Delight had made too loose and slack : And whereas in their Sorrows many of the Wicked renounce God, and dishonour him with Pride, and Stubbornness, and Infidelity, and Blasphemy, and Impatience ; they own God's Dominion, and humble themselves under his mighty Hand, and acknowledge his Justice, and honour him before Men with Confession of Sin, and Repentance, and Submissions, and Prayers, and Thanksgiving.

Thus the same Events are to the Righteous a nourishing Food, or a wholesome Medicine, and to the Wicked, a sweet or a bitter Poison.

If then, by what is visible of Mens Condition, we cannot judge certainly of their Grief and Pleasure; and if we could, yet Grief or Pleasure may either of them be a Blessing or a Curse, and which it is in a particular Case no Man can tell, if he knew not how either of them will be used, and what Effect they will have: Also, if the Objection be of no more Force, unless it be granted that present Delight is good, and Pain is evil; it will be plain enough, that something is supposed which is very obscure, and doubtful, and hard to be judged of, when this is used as an Argument against Providence, that there is *one Event to the Righteous, and to the Wicked.*

III. However the Day of Judgment is a sufficient Answer to the Objection.

The Belief and Expectation of this was implied in the last Particular, as the great Reason of the Behaviour of the Righteous in both Conditions, and as their great Support in Affliction; and the not believing or considering this, or considering it rather with Despair than Hope, is the Reason why the Wicked are so ill-governed, and often so unhappy in their Prosperity, and so comfortless in Affliction: But if bad Men lived in more Delight, and good Men in more Trouble and Grief than indeed they do, and God would not interpose his Almighty Power to alter the Course of Things; yet when the Wicked *go away into everlasting Punishment, and the Righteous into Life eternal*, Matth. xxv. 46. *then shall ye return and discern betwixt the Righteous and the Wicked, betwixt him that serveth God, and him that serveth him not*, Mal. iii. 18. And though Men are apt to think that Time stands almost still when they feel sharp Pains, and the Extremity of them makes Minutes seem longer than Days, as Days in a Transport of Pleasure seem swifter than Minutes; yet the proportion betwixt Time and Eternity will endure all this false Reckoning,

Reckoning, and make a clear Account and unanswerable Apology for Providence notwithstanding. When Men feel the Smart of their own, or think of their Friend's Affliction, or their Enemy's Prosperity, they are easily deluded with Impatience, or Envy, or Compassion. But if you would judge truly how inconsiderable the Things that happen now are in Comparison of an eternal State, look back to the Patriarchs and Prophets, to the Apostles and Martyrs; and above all, to *Jesus the Author and Finisher of our Faith, who, for the Joy that was set before him, endured the Cross, despising the Shame, and is set down at the Right Hand of the Throne of God*, Heb. xii. 2. What was that Moment of Life in which they were persecuted, afflicted, tormented, in Comparison of all the Time since and for ever to come, in all which they enjoy the most pure and ravishing Delights, wherewith God is now rewarding their Obedience, and Humility, and Faith, and Patience? Is the Objection against Providence, for leaving them exposed to so many Calamities, too hard for them to answer? Do they think Heaven, upon the Terms they had it, too dear a Purchase? It was expedient and necessary, in Pursuance of the wise Counsels and Purposes of God, that they should suffer for a while: But is God unrighteous? *Doth he forget their Work of Faith and Labour, of Love and Patience of Hope?* St. Paul, when he felt the Smart of his present Afflictions, called them *Light Afflictions, for a Moment, not worthy to be compared with the Glory to be revealed*. What must he judge of them now that the Afflictions are past, and remembered only for the Help and Increase of his Joy, now that he is entered into the Possession of that glorious Reward which he then had only in View and Prospect?

On the other Side, whither are the great Oppressors and Destroyers of Mankind gone? Where is *Herod* and *Pontius Pilate*, and the rest of the bloody Persecutors of *Christ* and his Saints? What is become of all their Pride
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and their envied Power and Glory? Is God their Debtor still for their Injustice and Blasphemies, and their insolent and prophane Joys? Hath he forgotten what they did? Or, doth he approve it? Now they know that which either they did not believe, or would not consider before; they abused his Patience that waited for their Repentance, and now they feel the Punishment of their Sin in the exquisite Torments of the Soul; and, full of Fear and Terror, expect greater at the Resurrection of the Body. If it seem strange to you that God should suffer the Righteous to be at the Mercy of the Wicked, behold the rich Man in Torment looking up to *Abraham*, and begging for a Drop of Water to cool his Tongue; and *Abraham*, without any Compassion of his Son, defending the Justice of God's Dealing with him and the poor Beggar that lay at his Door.

Behold the Goodness and Severity of God.

His Goodness, leading the Righteous into all the Ways of Discipline and Trial, proving their Obedience in the most dangerous Temptations, both from that Pleasure which their Nature covets, and that Pain which their Nature abhors; that when the World, and the Flesh, and the Devil have assaulted them with all their Weapons, they may get an entire and perfect Victory, and their Integrity may have the clearest Evidence; and they may be confirmed in Faith, and made strong, and constant and persevering in Virtue; and, after their good and faithful Service, *enter into their Master's Joy.*

His Severity, suffering the Wicked sometimes to be pampered with Fullness of Delight, and satisfied in all their Desires, and sometimes to be afflicted with Crosses and Disappointments, and tempted with Miseries and Plagues to the utmost Impatience; that they also may be tried, and that the Wickedness which would lie concealed for Want of Occasion, may break out and be brought to light; that in the Variety of Conditions, they may be led, if they will themselves, into the Commission

mission of all Sins, and may add Iniquity to Iniquity, till the Measure be full; that God may be glorified in the Day of Visitation and the Revelation of that righteous Judgment, which (how hard soever they may seem now) will plainly resolve all the Problems and Riddles of Providence.

The Sum of what hath been said is, That it is unavoidably necessary for Things to fall out to the Good and the Bad indifferently and uncertainly: That no Judgment can be made, by that which happens to Men, of their Grief or Pleasure, nor which of them is good or bad of them: That there will be a Day of Judgment, wherein every Man shall receive according to his Works; and therefore it is no Argument against Providence, that *there is one Event to the Righteous and to the Wicked.*

But it may be objected from Scripture: How doth this consist with what is there declared, that *Godliness is profitable for all Things, having the Promise of the Life that now is*, 1 Tim. vi. 8. According to which, we find in *Moses* and the *Psalms*, and the Writings of *Solomon* and the Prophets, and in the New Testament, several Expressions which seem to import a Promise of Prosperity to the Righteous?

A sufficient Answer to all the Places of Scripture that are alledged to that Purpose will be given in some of these three Particulars.

1. Abundance of these Promises usually insisted on are made to particular Persons or Nations, and must not be extended farther, as Promises for the Performance of which God's Faithfulness is engaged, though they may be applied as an Encouragements to hope, when there seems to be a Parity or Advantage of Reason in the Case. Many Things were promised to the Patriarchs, and to the Captains, and Judges, and Kings of *Israel*, and to the Prophets and Apostles, and they were assured that these Things must happen, for which they had the Security of God's Word. But it would

would be a great Extravagance for any Man else to be assured of the same Events by applying those Promises. If a Soldier be certain that he shall have Victory, because it was promised to *Josbua*; or a Sick Man that he shall recover, because a Prophet was sent to *Hezekiah*, to tell him that he should be healed; or if a Passenger in his Ship assure all his Company of an Escape with Life when they are driven by Storm upon the Rocks, because the Angel of God was sent to tell the Apostle *Paul*, *God hath given thee all them that sail with thee*, Acts xxvii. 24. The Things may happen accordingly, as the Prediction of a false Prophet may come to pass by Chance, and then they, who use the Scripture in this Fashion, may talk as they please of the Skill and Power of Faith, and what Wonders it can do with all the Promises that are to be found in the Bible. But if the Things happen not, then their confident Application to themselves, of Promises that were made to others; runs into Scandal and Blasphemy, and represents God as a Deceiver, that promises and does not perform. But though the Promises to them are not Promises to us, yet the Consideration of them is of great Use to engage our Obedience, and encourage our Hope, when we see how liberally God bestowed upon them temporal Blessings; and though we cannot infer from thence that we shall be blest in the same manner, we may infer the same Love and Care of us, and Acceptance of our faithful Service. In this Sense, *whatsoever Things were written afore-time, were written for our Learning, that we through Patience and Comfort of the Scriptures might have hope*, Rom. xv. 4.

2. Those Promises which concern all good Men are not Promises of Prosperity, but of God's Protection and Care of them in every Condition, and causing *all Things to work together for Good, to them that love God*, Rom. viii. 28. Nothing shall happen to them without his Notice and Allowance. It may be good for them to be afflicted, and therefore the same Love of God
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sometimes prevents Afflictions from befalling them, sometimes delivers them after they have suffered a little, sometimes keeps them for a long Time under severe Discipline, but comforts and supports them all the while: *The Steps of a good Man are ordered by the Lord: Tho' he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down; for the Lord upholdeth him with his Hand*, Psal. xxxvii. 23, 24. *God will not forsake him, nor forget his Complaint.* If Troubles abound, *Consolations shall abound much more.* *Tho' the outward Man perish, the inward Man is renewed Day by Day*, 2 Cor. iv. 16. *The Lord knoweth how to deliver the Godly out of Temptations*, 1 Pet. ii. 9. either by keeping them out of that Condition in which they will be tempted, or so assisting them with his Grace, that they shall not fall into that Sin (for Example, that Apostacy) to which they are tempted; though they may fall into that Persecution from whence very strong Temptations to Apostacy may arise. *God is faithful, who will not suffer them to be tempted above that they are able; but will with the Temptation also make a Way to escape, that they may be able to bear it*, 1 Cor. x. 13. This watching of Providence over the Righteous, and Care for them, and assisting them in every Condition with convenient Grace, is the Sum of those Promises which are absolutely made to Godhiness in the Scripture, and especially in the New Testament.

3. Many of the Places of Scripture most insisted on in this Argument are not Promises, but general Rules, wherein the ordinary Method of Providence, and the usual Effects of many Virtues and Vices are declared. *Solomon tells us of that Wisdom which consists especially in the Fear of God; Length of Days are in her right Hand, and in her left Hand Riches and Honour*, Prov. iii. 16. *By Humility and the Fear of the Lord are Riches, and Honour, and Life*, Prov. xxii. 4. There are many such general Rules as these, the Reason and Truth of which is evident in most Cases, and it is as evident that they will not hold always. In the ordinary

nary Course of Things, the most Strength, and best Courage, and the wisest Conduct shall get the Victory: Diligence in a profitable Calling shall make a Man rich; if he be humble, he shall be beloved; if he be faithful, he shall be trusted: He that is prudent and just in his Actions shall be esteemed, and have a good Reputation; but for all that, Accidents which no Man can foresee or prevent, may interpose betwixt the most likely Means and the End. The Chance of War, Thieves, Robbers, unfaithful Servants, treacherous Friends, the Constructions of Jealousy and Ill-nature, secret Whispering, or open Defaming, and false Accusing; the Pestilence that walketh in Darkeness, infecting a Man's good Name, and the Arrow which wounds it at Noon-day, may hinder all those Virtues of that Reward which is also the natural Effect and Consequence of them. And in such Cases, *the Race will not be to the Swift, nor the Battle to the Strong; neither yet Bread to the Wise, nor yet Riches to Men of Understanding, nor yet Favour to Men of Skill*, Eccles. ix. 11. These are general Rules, but Time and Chance make many Exceptions; from all which it appears consistent with Scripture, as well as Reason, that *there is one Event to the Righteous and to the Wicked*.

The Consideration of what has been said will dispose us to be slow in judging our Neighbours, and careful in governing ourselves, as we pass together through all the Changes and Chances of this mortal Life. Events will no better justify our Opinion of other Men's Actions, than Examples will prove the Goodness of our own. We must judge by Rules, not by Success, and we must live by Rules, not by Examples.

Despise no Man for his Poverty or ill Success, lest you despise a Man whom God will honour. *Bless not the Covetous whom the Lord abhorreth. Let not thine Heart envy Sinners: But be thou in the Fear of the Lord all the Day long: For surely there is an End, and thine Expectation shall not be cut off*, Prov. xxiii.

17, 18. In Afflictions be patient. *In the Day of Adversity consider.* In Prosperity, *be not high-minded, but fear.* Remember that a low Estate may be your great Benefit and Security; and that Power and Riches may be a Snare to their Owner. Learn of St. Paul, *in whatsoever State you are, therewith be content.* Take in good Part, and make the best use of every Thing that happens; and be well assured, that nothing can happen amiss, if that be your continual Care, which was the Result of all Solomon's Study and Experience, Eccles. xii. 13, 14. *Fear God and keep his Commandments, for this is the whole Duty of Man: For God shall bring every Work into Judgment, with every secret Thing, whether it be good or whether it be evil.*

The End of the FIRST SERMON.



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S E R M O N
O N T H E
E X C E L L E N C Y
O F
C H R I S T I A N C H A R I T Y :

Proving it absolutely necessary to arrive at the Love
of G O D.

Preached at

E A T O N.

By Z. C R A D O C K, D. D.





I T I M. i. 5.

*Now the End of the Commandment
is Charity.*

THE Gospel at the first was published with such clear Demonstration of the Spirit and Power of God, that Multitudes of all Sects and Nations were constrain'd to the Acknowledgment of the Truth; many of whom, like *Simon Magus*, remain'd still in the Gall of Bitterness, and Bonds of Iniquity: They could not oppose the Divine Authority of the Doctrines, and yet were unwilling to resign up their worldly Interests to the Practice of them; from whence proceeded the first depraving of Christianity. Such Men would make it a meer Speculation, or an obscure Mystery, that afforded Matter of perpetual Wrangling and Dispute about the Sense of it: They would mix it with *Jewish* and *Heathenish* Rites, and reconcile it to those Doctrines and Usages which it came on Purpose to abolish: They would confound it with quite contrary Principles, and so deprive it of all Force and Effect upon the Conscience, that it might signify as little to the Reformation of the World, as corrupted *Judaism*, or the Superstition of the *Gentiles*. Thus some of the Disciples and Instruments of the Devil obstructed the Efficacy of the Gospel more

by professing it, than the rest that were open Enemies, could by the Persecution of it ; of which malicious Practice St. *Paul* warns *Timothy* in the Beginning of this Chapter, and commands him to use his Authority for the Preservation of the Evangelical Doctrine pure and intire, to charge some *μὴ ἐπερὶ διδασκαλεῖν*, that they preach no other Doctrine, *ver. 3.* not to give Heed to Fables and endless Genealogies, *which minister Questions rather than edifying, which is in Faith, ver. 4.* And he furnishes him with a plain Argument in the Text for the Confutation of all such Teachers, taken from the main End and Design of the Gospel (for that must be the Meaning of the *παράγγελία*, or Commandment) which End was not any sublime Speculation, much less vain and impertinent Jangling, but the sincere Love of God, and of one another : *For the End of the Commandment is Charity.*

We need enquire no farther into the Context ; for the Words are an entire Proposition, which may be explain'd and prov'd by these two Considerations.

- I. Of the Nature of the Commandment or Gospel, and how apt a Means it is to beget the Habit and Grace of Charity.
- II. Of the Nature of Charity, how fit and worthy this is to be the End of the Commandment or Gospel ; each of which singly, but especially both together, will abundantly confirm the Proposition in the Text, that Charity is the End of the Commandment.

To begin with the Consideration of the Nature of the Commandment, and how apt a Means it is to beget the Habit and Grace of Charity : And that I may not exceed in so copious an Argument, I will prove briefly these three Conclusions.

- I. That

1. That by the Representations in the Gospel of the Divine Nature and Attributes, we are most effectually persuaded and assisted to the Love of God.

2. That by Life and Immortality which the Gospel brought to Light, and proposed to Mankind as their chief Good and last End, the great Obstructions of Charity among Men are remov'd.

3. That by all the Precepts and Institutions of the Gospel, we are either assisted in the Acquisition of this Grace of Charity, or directed to those Actions, which are the most genuine and sincere Expressions of it.

1. First, that by the Representations in the Gospel of the Divine Nature and Attributes, we are most effectually persuaded and assisted to the Love of God.

Our Affections are not so at our own Disposal, as to determine them to what we will: Our Love and Hatred, Hope and Fear, are so by Nature directed to their proper Objects, that it is not in our Power to love Evil, or hate Good, to fear Happiness, or hope for a Calamity; and therefore when we are commanded to love God with all our Hearts, the Knowledge of his Goodness is necessary, or else the Object or Cause of Love is taken away, and the Command will be found impossible to be obey'd.

Wherefore the Foundation of this excellent Virtue must necessarily be laid in such a Belief concerning God, as may make him the proper Object of our Love.

And accordingly we have him described in this Commandment as a Lover of Souls, as preventing us with his Grace, and loading us with his Benefits, as full of Pity and Compassion, abounding in Goodness and Truth, inviting the most obstinate to Repentance by much Long-suffering and Forbearance; slow to Anger, and apt to pardon, as providing a Ransom and Satisfaction for himself, that to us the Forgiveness might

might be free, as careful of the Affairs of Mankind, and disposing all Events to the Benefit of the Good, and the Conversion of the Wicked, that they may be saved from the Wrath to come. If after all this it be found very hard to love God with a fervent Affection, because he is invisible and incomprehensible, and we have no positive Conceptions of his Essence, but think and speak of him by Negations only; which improper Way of Understanding is more apt to possess us with Wonder and Amazement, than Love and Delight, because our Imagination (the powerful Governess of our Affections) can form no Shape or Similitude of the Being to which these Attributes belong. To help our Infirmary in this Case, God was manifest in the Flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his Glory, the Glory, as of the Only Begotten of the Father, full of Grace and Truth. The Pattern of the Divine Goodness was exposed to View in the Man Christ Jesus, and we are furnished with an Object of Love and Adoration suitable to our Nature, where our Imagination hath Room and Scope enough, without bordering upon Idolatry, to excite and raise our dull Minds, by representing to us the Son of God as a Man of Sorrows, and acquainted with Griefs, as crucified before our Eyes; as bearing the Chastisement of our Peace, that by his Stripes we might be heal'd; as demonstrating in all his Actions a most gracious and merciful Disposition, an unwearied Diligence in doing Good, and procuring the Happiness and Salvation of Men. That great Obligations to the Love of God, arising from the Knowledge of his Nature, are the peculiar Blessings of the Gospel, our Saviour himself teacheth: *No Man knoweth the Father but the Son, and he to whom the Son hath revealed him.* I confess the Reason of Men awaken'd by serious Consideration, and not perverted by Prejudice or false Religion, may arrive at strong Conjectures of the Goodness of God; but the considering Part of Mankind is but very small, and
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how far short the Belief of God's Goodness falls of the universal Knowledge of his Being and Power, we may be inform'd by the Histories of all Nations and Religions. *The invisible Things of God are seen to all Men by the Things that are made*, i. e. his eternal Power and Godhead: *The Heavens declare the Glory of God, and the Firmament sheweth his handy Work.* But this Knowledge of Almighty Power and Sovereignty is apt to produce Reverence and Fear only, and may leave Men in a fatal Doubtfulness of God's Mercy, and the Goodness of his Nature; which is the only Account to be given of many cruel superstitious Rites common to all Nations. Why did the Priests of *Baal* cut their Flesh, and the Idolatrous *Jews* pass their Children through the Fire to *Moloch*, and the *Romans*, instructed from the Books of the *Sibyls*, bury two *Greeks* and two *Gauls* alive after the Battle of *Cannæ*, and the *Carthaginians* sacrifice the Flower of their Noble Youth when their City was besieged? Why do the *Mahometan* Priests (and that of the most esteem'd Order) gash and gore themselves, and the Votaries of *Mecca* burn their Eyes out, and the wild *Indians*, and some barbarous Nations of *America*, offer up daily Sacrifices of Men (not their Enemies, but their Neighbours and Children) and make their Altars reek every Morning with Human Blood, and furnish their Shambles out of the Temple with Man's Flesh? Why do some Christians (who have adopted too many of the *Heathen* Superstitions into the Family of Christ) macerate and torment themselves, mortify the Flesh, not in the moral, but in the literal Sense, and this not as a Discipline only, and thereby to govern with more Advantage their Appetites and Passions (for this Reason and Experience will allow to be an approved Method of Virtue) but for meer Satisfaction to God, with which he is pleas'd for its own Sake, without any further Design; and therefore will remit no Part of this Debt of Pain and Sorrow which we owe him, but
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it must be paid here, or with great Use and Increase in Purgatory ? How come many sincere and honest Minds disposed to all Virtue, but abused with wretched Impostures, to be affrighted with continual Dreads of God's Hatred, without reflecting upon any notorious Guilt of their own as the Cause of it, nor assigning any other Reason, than because it pleaseth him to make many the Objects of his Displeasure, and the everlasting Monuments of his Almighty Fury ? From which dreadful Jealousy it's no Wonder if blasphemous Thoughts haunt them like Apparitions, and possess them like evil Spirits, which no Charm or Exorcism can cast out. How could all this happen, and the World be overspread with Superstitions so near a Kin, and that without learning them (in most of the Examples) one Nation from another, if after the necessary Acknowledgment of God's Power, which the Frame of the World teaches, the greatest Part of Men were not inclin'd to suspect, that Rigour, and almost implacable Severity, is the prevailing Inclination of His Nature, a Suspicion that will easily lead Men to Flattery and Hypocrisy, but never to the sincere Love of God ; the Causes which produce that Grace, cast out this servile Fear, and instruct us in the Worship and Obedience of God from a better Principle of the Spirit of Love and Power, and a sound Mind.

Thus having prov'd that this Commandment, and this alone, gives such a clear and certain Account of the Divine Nature and Attributes, as may most effectually persuade us to the Love of God, I come now to the Second Conclusion, *viz.* That by the Life and Immortality which the Gospel hath brought to Light, and proposed to Mankind as their chief Good and last End, the great Obstructions of Charity among Men are remov'd.

'Twould be too long a Digression to examine the Difference betwixt the Probability that the Soul was immortal, contended for by some Philosophers, or a more

more certain Belief of another Life found among the *Jews*, and the so clear and plain Declaration of it in the Gospel, that it seems almost its only Design to assure the World of a Resurrection from the Dead, and a Life to come. Thus St. *Paul* preach'd at *Athens* Jesus and the Resurrection, when they accus'd him for setting forth strange Gods, and St. *Matthias* was chosen to be with the rest of the Apostles, a Witness of our Saviour's Resurrection, the Pledge and Security of our's; and St. *Paul* sums up that Faith by which we must be sav'd, in those few Articles, how that *Christ died for our Sins, and rose again the third Day, according to the Scriptures*: So that notwithstanding any Conjecture, or Belief, in the World before, yet in Regard of the clear Manifestation, and universal Publication, and more evident Proof, the Scripture saith with good Reason, that *Life and Immortality was brought to Light by the Gospel*: The Influence of which upon the Grace of Charity is too plain to need many Words.

The Difference between Good and Evil is fix'd and determin'd by our last End; for all that we esteem Good, is either chosen for itself, and the immediate Satisfaction it affords in the Enjoyment of it, and such Good hath the Nature of a Means to that End. The greater Part live by the Principle and Belief of *Epicurus*, not knowing (or which is all one) not considering the Relation which this Life hath to another. Here is all the Happiness they look for, and then it's no Wonder to see the daily Tragedies acted by Covetousness, Malice, Ambition and Envy: For he that expects not another Life, will make the best of this, he will eat and drink, because to Morrow he must die, and die for ever; he will endeavour to take his Fill of all the Content that Wealth, Honour and Pleasure can promise, but not give: For this is his Portion, and his Lot is this; and in Pursuance of that mistaken Felicity which the World flatters him with, he will envy his Neighbour, and hate his Enemy, and prosecute his Revenge,
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and fulfil his Lust ; he will oppress the Poor, and vex the Righteous, and make his Power and Strength to be the Law of Justice. He can never rise higher than the meer Counterfeit of Goodness, because the Practice would hinder him from making those large Provisions for the Flesh, which he accounts the only Art and Method of true Happiness. What can move him to be liberal, but the Hope of a good Bargain, that his Kindness may be return'd with Usury? What can persuade him to conceal his too deep Sense of those Injuries which he cannot forgive, but that he is too weak to revenge them? What can constrain him to be just, but the Fear of Laws, which if they may be avoided by Fraud or Power, there is no Bond can hold him, who thinks himself born at all Adventures, his Soul to be nothing but the Breath of his Nostrils, or the Beating of his Heart. The designing of the good Things of this Life as our last End, is the Wisdom that is earthly, sensual, devilish, full of Confusion, and every evil Work; this fills the World with the Fruits of the Flesh, Hatred, Variance, Emulation, Wrath, Strife, Sedition, Envy, Murder, Drunkenness, Revelling, &c.

1. The Author of the Book of *Wisdom* gives a clear Account of the whole Matter, both of the Effects and the Cause, describing in several Chapters the Nature and Behaviour of those Idolaters, who having no Sense of the True God, nor Belief of the World to come, their Conscience was unable to oblige them either to Religion or Justice. For in as much as their Trust is in Idols, which have no Life, tho' they swear falsely, they look not to the Hurt, neither discerning the Wages of Unrighteousness, nor the Reward of blameless Souls, they err in the Knowledge of God, and live in a great War of Ignorance; so that there reigns in the World, Blood, Manslaughter, Theft, Dissimulation, Corruption, Unfaithfulness, Tumults, Perjury, disquieting of good Men, Forgetfulness of good Turns, Adultery, Shamelessness, Uncleanliness: They are either mad when they

they are merry, or prophecy Lies, or live unjustly, or lightly forswear themselves. They count our Life here a Pastime, a Market for Gain; they say we must be getting every Way, tho' by evil Means; of all which this is the only Reason, that their Hope is more vile than Earth. They know not their Maker, he who inspir'd into them an active Soul, and breath'd in a living Spirit.

Thus while Mens Hopes are in this Life only, the Law of Charity can never find Obedience. So reasonable and just is that Prayer of *David*, *Deliver my Soul, O Lord, from the wicked Men of this World, who have their Portion in this Life.*

But when the Proposal of a better End hath furnished us with another Reason for all our Actions, when it hath call'd us to the Pursuit of true and everlasting Happiness, withdrawn our Affections from a fond Doting upon specious gaudy Trifles; when it hath taught us the Vanity of the World better than Experience could teach *Solomon* himself; when it hath dried up the Roots of those Evils which afflict the Life of Man, and fill up the whole Extent and Compass of it with Miseries and Sorrows; then Charity will be an easy Precept, a Light will spring forth to lead us in the Ways of Righteousness and Peace, and the Passions of the Soul (so full of Darkness and Confusion before) will fall of themselves into due Order, and the Love of God, who hath ordain'd us to so excellent an End, will diffuse itself into all our Actions, and descend from him in a regular and just Subordination upon his Creatures. For the designing the Happiness of another Life, as our last End, is the Wisdom that is from above, which is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of Mercy and good Fruits, without Partiality and without Hypocrisy. The Pursuit of this End will cool the immoderate Fervour of Desire, it will abate the Thirst of Covetousness, assuage the Swelling of Pride, sweeten the Sharpness of

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Envy,

Envy, quench the Fire of Contention, and lessen the Esteem of the World, with all its Poms and Vanities. If this were the general Scope and Aim of Mankind, their Interests would no longer clash and interfere, they would be reduc'd to the original Innocence and Simplicity of Nature; there would be no confounding Care to vex the Mind, no Murmuring or Repining in the Family, no Cries or Complaining in the Streets; instead of Oppression and Revenge, we should see nothing but Justice, Mercy, Humility and Devotion. For by the Hopes of that future Life which the Gospel proposes as our chief Good and last End, the great Obstructions of Charity among Men would be remov'd: And so I pass on to the third and last Conclusion.

3. That by all the Precepts and Institutions in the Gospel, we are either assisted in the Acquisition of this Grace of Charity, or directed to those Actions which are the most genuine and sincere Expressions of it.

To confine my Discourse of this Matter within a few Instances: Nothing could be more available to the Acquisition and Improvement of this excellent Grace, than the Precept of Repentance, and the Institution of the Holy Eucharist, from the former of which it derives its first Conceptions and Principles of Life, and from the latter a great Deal of Nourishment and Growth. Repentance is the Acknowledgement of God's Authority, and the Equity of his Laws, and the Submission of ourselves to him a-new with Sorrow and Shame, and Resolutions and Vows of better Obedience. The first Motive to it is the Fear of Punishment and Hope of Pardon, and the Soul and Spirit of it is the Sense of our own Unworthiness, and that excellent Goodness against which we have offended, wherein every Argument by which our Folly in departing from God is aggravated, doth with a mighty Force persuade and oblige us to love him; it purgeth our Minds from those evil Affec-
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tions which sets us at Variance and Contention with our Neighbour, and will give us no Assurance of being reconciled to God till we have satisfied our injur'd Brother, and repair'd as far as we can the Breaches we have made in his Fortunes by Injustice, or in his Reputation by Calumny and Detraction. And then it obligeth us to love him, as the only true Demonstration of our Love to God, and to kill the Root of Hatred, that no Fruit may grow thereon ; it admits us not to the Hope of Forgiveness, but upon the indispensable Condition of loving our Enemies, which how hard and grievous soever it may seem, yet no Commutation will be allowed for this Duty, tho' our Views be never so large, and our Discipline severer than an Hermit's, and our Alms as profuse as the Squandering of a Prodigal, and our Sorrows for Sin should exceed the intolerable Anguish, Distraction and Despair of the fondest Mother for the Loss of her only Child. And when thus the Seed of Charity is sown in our Hearts by true Repentance, what Growth, Ripeness and Increase doth it receive from the Holy Eucharist ? If there were nothing in this Institution, but the moral Effect of the Preparations and Dispositions of a worthy Receiver, yet even that Effect would be due to the Institution itself ; for that which is the Cause of all those Dispositions and Preparations, is the Cause of all that they produce. If we have any Part in the Sacrifice of Christ, we must not abstain from the Altar, the Representation of it ; and yet we must not presume to snatch any Thing from thence with unhallow'd Hands, nor prophane the Mystery of our Union with Christ, by bringing Hearts full of Malice to the Sacrament of Love, nor dare to partake of this solemn Remembrance of the Lord's Death till he come, without some Degree of that Devotion which the serious Thoughts of that Truth will raise ; and such Hatred of all Sin, as that which crucify'd the Lord of Life, deserves ; and such Love to all Men, as the great Example of dying for us while we were yet Enemies, may

justly provoke us to. But beside all this, we are to expect an Addition of Strength to every Virtue; but Charity more especially, the Mother of them all, by an immediate Influence of the Power and Spirit of God descending upon the worthy Receiver, by which this holy Mystery becomes one of the widest and deepest Channels of the Divine Grace, in which the Streams flow that daily refresh the City of God.

And here I may conclude the first Consideration of the Nature of this Commandment, and how apt it is to beget the Habit and Grace of Charity: For how the rest of the Precepts direct us to those Actions which are the most genuine and sincere Expressions of it, will farther appear by the second Consideration.

II. Of the Nature of Charity, how fit and worthy it is to be the End of this Commandment.

Tho' there be a Connection of all Virtue, and Dependence one upon another by a nearer and remoter Consequence, yet in many of them it is not easy to be discern'd. Some are of a more general Nature and Operation, and others confin'd to a narrower Compass; but the Influence of Charity upon them all is as visible as the Dependence of an Effect upon its immediate Cause. The Passion of Love is the Fountain of all the rest, from whence Desire and Loathing, Pleasure and Pain, Joy and Grief, Hope and Despair, Anger and Fear, Courage and Faintness of Heart, derive their Being and Degrees, and various Applications. The Grace of Charity is nothing else but the Passion of Love disposed and ordered aright, and that with such Constancy and Steadiness, as proceeds both from infus'd and acquir'd Habits. Now the Government of those Passions, the restraining of them within due Bounds, and the Determination of them to right Objects, being the main Business of Virtue, Charity by a necessary Consequence will be found as well the Parent of all the Virtues,

tues, as Love is of all his Passions. From hence Prudence and Temperance, Justice and Fortitude, with all their Train and Retinue, derive themselves: It is the Bond of Perfection, and the Fulfilling of the whole Law, and therefore fit and worthy to be the End of it, which may be made clear and evident by a brief Explication of these three Propositions.

1. That from the Habit and Grace of Charity flows the most easy and acceptable Performance to God and Man.

2. That without it there is no Security or Likelihood of Perseverance.

3. That this Grace is not only a Condition of Salvation, as all others are, but it is the immediate Preparation and Disposition of the Soul for the Happiness of Heaven.

1. From the Habit and Grace of Charity flows the most easy and acceptable Performance of all our Duties to God and Man. I will not presume to determine that hard Question, whether Contrition, as it is commonly distinguish'd from Attrition, be a necessary Part of Repentance which will be accepted of God? It is very possible for a Man who yet loves the World too well, and accounts Religion a hard Service, and would be glad of Permission to lead a sensual Life with Security, to be mov'd, by the Smartness of a present Calamity, or the Fear of future Temporal Judgments, to very sorrowful Reflections upon his past Sins, and serious Resolutions to amend his Life: Much more may the Terrors of Conscience and the Fear of Damnation, affright him for a Time from the Commission of Sin, and the Fulfilling of his Lusts. This is acknowledg'd to be the usual Beginning of Repentance, and if Fear were not a Motive of excellent Use for the Conversion of wicked Men, it would not have been one of the principal Topics of *St. Paul's* Rhetorick, as himself assures us it

was: *Knowing therefore the Terrors of the Lord, we persuade Men.* But notwithstanding the Question is very difficult, and the Difficulty arises from the Nature of all such Changes where the Extrems are so opposite, and all the mean Way partakes more or less, every Part differently, of both the opposite Extrems. Who can assign the divided Moment between the Day and the Night, or draw a Line on the Surface of a River, that shall exactly part the fresh and brackish Waters? Who can tell the Instant of Conception, or when the living Soul is inspir'd, or when the yet imperfect Child becomes induc'd with Sense, and what is the first Act of Reason and Understanding. In all Things of this Nature the Difference is best discern'd at a Distance, and so it is in Repentance, whatever the first Motive be, if we put no Obstruction in his Way, the Divine Spirit will infuse into our Souls the Grace of Charity, and shed the Love of God abroad in our Hearts, and we shall more easily discern the Progress we have made in Repentance then, the precise Time when it began, and may receive abundant Satisfaction to ourselves, without being so skilful as to tell exactly the highest Degree that falls short, or the lowest that finds Acceptance: And yet it is very severe to account the attrite Sinner as remaining yet in a State of Reprobation, especially since the Scripture never draws the Evidence of our Acceptance with God, from the Principle or Motive to Repentance, but from the Effects and Fruits of it, from confessing and forsaking of our Sins, from ceasing to do evil and learning to do well; which may be the Fruits of a Repentance proceeding from Fear only: And he in whom the Beginning is found, may die before he arrives at a higher Principle of the Love of God, of the Love of Righteousness; but he that in the Course of his Obedience to God hath never any better Cause or Motive to Care and Diligence than the Fear of Punishment, will offer himself unto God a lame and imperfect Sacrifice; he will not serve him with the Duty of a Son, but the unwilling Submission of a Slave; and his

his yet unmortified Lusts and Passions will bribe his Understanding, if they can, to allow of the Exchange of Religion for Hypocrisy : However he will always be liable to such vain Scruples and perverse Mistakes, as a doz'd and over-aw'd Mind is subject to, when the continual Risings of the Mists of Fears encompass the Light of the Soul with a Cloud, and deprive it of the Succours of Reason.

But if the Heavenly Gift of Charity drive away that evil Spirit of Bondage, his Thoughts will be enlarg'd, and his Understanding enlighten'd, as by the Inspiration of God, and that crazy diseased Temper of the Soul will suddenly be converted to the Strength and Vigour of Health with such Success and Speed, as attended our Saviour's Almighty Word, when he caused the Blind to see, the Deaf to hear, and the Dead to be rais'd up to Life.

The Love of God will cause him to yield a cheerful Obedience, and to account the Service of his Maker a perfect Freedom ; it will inspire his Prayers with a perfect Fervour, and direct him to such Petitions as are fit to be made to the best and most perfect Being ; it will make him approach to God with Boldness and Confidence, and yet not without Reverence and a godly Fear : It will teach him the Art of reconciling Importance and lively Hope with humble Submission and Resignation to God ; for it will possess him with a full Assurance of that Wisdom, which knows better than he, what Satisfaction is fit to be given to his Desires, and of that Bounty which will deny nothing that is needful and convenient ; and when other Men are full of Care and Perplexity, and doubtful of all Events, it will secure him against the Fear of evil Tidings, fix his Heart to trust in the Lord : And tho' he cannot always resolve the Riddles of Providence, the unequal Distribution of Good and Evil in this Life ; yet that Belief concerning God which is the Cause of his Love to him, will give him a full Assurance, that for all the Calamities

Calamities of good Men there is a just Reason, and will be an exceeding Recompence, and he need inquire no farther; for the Counsel and Wisdom of God cannot be traced but by a Wisdom as great as his: And therefore the Love of God will teach him to admire the unsearchable Riches of his Wisdom, to depend securely on his Mercy and Truth, and to bethink himself daily with intire Satisfaction and unfeigned Joy, that all his Affairs are in the Hands of Almighty Wisdom and Goodness, and that whatever Men design, there is no Change can happen without the Permission and Operation of God.

But the Praises of God, which is all that our Poverty can return for his innumerable Mercies, seem to be the most genuine and proper Effect of this Grace of Charity, as the Prophet *David* teaches us: *I will love the Lord alway, his Praise shall ever be in my Mouth.* Psalms and devout Hymns may help to raise and express our Thanksgivings with that Life which the Love of God will breathe into them: It will make it our chiefest Delight to think of his infinite Perfections, to be confounded with Wonder and Astonishment, and to be always gazing at the Brightness of his Glory: It will ravish us into frequent Extasies and Raptures, and cause us to be sometimes oppress'd, to faint and languish under such a mighty Sense, as all the Art and Power of Speech can never express. This heavenly Gift will fill our Minds with Divine Consolations, and good Hope through Grace, and the Peace of God that passeth all Understanding, which all the unwilling Lapses of our Frailty shall never abate: For as long as we are not conscious to ourselves of Malice, which is a Contradiction to Charity, nor of such Negligence as may justly convict our Pretences to love God, of Fiction and Hypocrisy; we shall see clearly through that perfect Love which casteth out Fear, the Forgiveness of all those Infirmities and Imperfections, which are necessary to our Nature, and consistent with our Sincerity.

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Thus doth our Love to God demonstrate itself in all the Acts of Piety, Reverence, and Devotion, of Hope, Confidence, and Thanksgiving; and our whole Duty to Man is but like several Fruits upon a Tree; for the Grafts are divers, but the Stock and Root is the same. All the Virtues belonging to Human Society are but the various Expressions of Charity to our Neighbour, according to the Relation in which he stands: For Charity to our Superiors, is Respect; and to our Governours, Obedience; to our Acquaintance, Kindness; to our Friends, Fidelity, to our Benefactors, Gratitude; to our Inferiors, Condescension; to Strangers, Hospitality; to the Afflicted, Compassion; to the Poor, Liberality; and to our Enemies, Forgiveness. By our Readiness in such Exercises of Virtue, the Growth and Strength of Charity is perceived, and the Beating of the Heart is felt in every Pulse. And tho' we may look upon ourselves as obliged by Custom, Civility, or Interest, to some of these Virtues; yet without Charity, as the Life and Soul of them, they are but the dead Image and artificial Counterfeit of Virtue, Trees laden with waxen Fruit, which may deceive the Eye, but the Taste will soon discover it. Where this Grace is not the Motive and Guide of our Actions, all our Pretences to Goodness will betray themselves not to be the genuine Offspring of Sincerity, but the base Issue of Craft and Design, of Pride, Covetousness, Ambition, or Vainglory, and an ugly Hue, the Mark of their Parentage, will be upon them: Our Hospitality will be with grudging, and our Gifts without Simplicity; our Courtesy with Dissimulation, and our Mercy without Cheerfulness. The best Laws can take little or no Cognizance of Abundance of Mischief by which Men are disquieted and injured every Day: Surliness and Ill-nature, Impudence and Immodesty, Disrespect to a Parent, Unfaithfulness to a Benefactor, Lying and vain Boasting, Envy and Detraction,

Detraction, Wiliness and the crafty Circumvention of Simplicity: And where the Laws have most Power, they can but punish the Sinner, when they could not prevent the Sin. But if Religion might prevail to impose upon us this Law of Charity, the Penalties ordained for the Unruly and Disobedient would be of small Use, and every Man's well-guided Conscience would be his Law, the Generation of the World would be healthful, and there would be no Poison of Death in them, the Lion would lie down with the Lamb, and the Wolf would eat Straw with the Ox, and the Earth would be blest with Abundance of Peace, Justice would run down like Waters, and Righteousness like a mighty Stream.

So certain would the Grace of Charity secure the Performance of all Duties both to God and Man, which is the first Argument of its Worthiness and Fitness to be the main Scope and Design of the Gospel.

2. Without this Habit and Grace of Charity, there is no Security, not so much as a Likelihood of Perseverance, whatever our Resolutions and Beginnings may promise. It was mentioned before, that Fear of Hell might produce a present Resolution to obey the Commandments of God; and that it is not safe to condemn even such Repentance, as utterly incapable of God's Acceptance: But if we stay there, and design to govern our Actions by no better a Principle than the Fear of Punishment, the Temptations to Apostacy will beset us round, and assault us every Moment: We shall be distracted between Delight and Fear, between Pleasure and Shame, between Nature and Force, between God and Mammon; and 'tis great Odds but our Delight in Sin will prevail at last against the Fear of Punishment; for the Inclinations of our Nature are always awake and active, but the Watchfulness and Intention of the Mind may be tired, and we shall more easily

easily forget or confute our Fears, that are at a great Distance, than deny the Satisfaction of our Desire that are present, and attempt our best settled Resolutions with a continual and pressing Importunity; and therefore against such a powerful and watchful Enemy, we can never be secure by a mere Defence against his Assaults, we shall always be in Danger till he be killed and destroyed, till the Old Man be mortified with his deceitful Lusts, and we endued not with new Resolutions only, but with new Inclinations, with a new Nature and another Spirit, which is nothing else but the Grace and Habit of Charity. And accordingly *David* accounts that the Reason of his constant and intire Obedience: *I kept thy Commandments, and loved them exceedingly: O how love I thy Law! It is my Meditation all the Day.* The Examples are but too many of Mens Apostacy, turning to Folly from the most solemn Vows of Obedience to God, of their Beginning in the Spirit, and Ending in the Flesh; but such Men for the most Part never had any true Relish or Savour of Religion, they were either overawed by a severe Education, or affrighted in a Sickness at the Apprehension of approaching Death, or amazed and confounded at some great and sudden Adversity; and when their Appetites were dulled, and the Taste of Pleasure lost by a Disease or Grief, they were at Leisure to be devout, and perhaps found it the best Entertainment of themselves, till Health or the Forgetfulness of Sorrow should restore their old Inclinations and Appetites again, and when they were too weak to resist; and the Strength of all their Vows to a present Temptation was but like Tow before the Fire; the only Check was some Fear of the Divine Vengeance: But a Mind willing and prepared to Sin can quickly rid itself of such Fears, and the Devil will teach him to confute him by Infidelity or prophane Security; or if the Sense of another Life, and the Judgment to come, be so deeply imprinted, that it cannot

cannot be soon forgotten, he will furnish them with Arts of deluding themselves into the Satisfaction of their Lusts, by the specious Pretences of Superstition or Hypocrisy, Heresy or Schism. It is an easy Thing for him that would rid himself of the Yoke and Bondage of the Laws of God, to find out Cavils and Objections against it, and to gravel himself with every little Difficulty ; and he may confirm himself by the Examples of Abundance of licentious and atheistical Men, whom he will therefore believe to be Men of great Wit and Sagacity, the wisest and most discerning Part of Mankind, because he loves their Opinions, and would gladly have a good Authority to justify him in the embracing of them.

And when a Man is thus partial against Religion, and desirous to have it confuted, every little Exception, every sarcastical and sharp Reflection upon it, every Similitude by which a Delusion may be represented, will be allow'd for a strong and unanswerable Argument ; every Hebraism, unusual Phrase, every Proposition of Divine Truth which exceeds his Comprehension, every Declaration of the Divine Counsel which he discerns not the Reason of, will be a clear Demonstration that all is Forgery and a mere Scarecrow : That eternal Damnation may be a pretty Contrivance and ingenious Plot to keep the Multitude in Awe and Subjection, and so may be the Instrument of wise Men, but the Mistress and Governess of Fools only : That the Fears of Religion are but pannick Terrors, but Vizards and Mormoes for Children to be affrighted with, and that the Hopes of Religion are but Castles in the Air, vain and deceitful Promises of Happiness, with the Fancy of which the Miserable and Discontented relieve themselves against the real Inconveniencies of their present Condition. That therefore it is perfect Madness to forego the Pleasure of Sensuality, and real Interests and Concernments of this present Life for the Hopes of a pleasing Dream,

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or the Fears and Jealousies of Ignorance and Superstition.

Others who are not so wise to do wickedly, as to become Infidels first, that there may be nothing to make them afraid; yet if they have no sincere Love for God, and his Commandments become grievous to them, they can find a Way of returning to their beloved Sins without Danger, by flattering themselves with the Hopes of repenting to better Purpose in old Age, when their Temptations shall be fewer, and their Obedience to the Laws of God less painful: And neither Reason nor Experience will convince them of the Vanity and Folly of this Presumption, tho' a little Consideration would assure them, that Habits grow stronger by Continuance, that the Fountain of Corruption will never dry up of itself, that the Appetites and Affections of Men may change indeed naturally, but it will be from one sinful Satisfaction to another, leaving them still under the same Necessity, and a far greater Difficulty of subduing their Lusts. That the Custom of sinning will darken the Understanding, debauch the Conscience, harden the Heart, and so take away the first Causes and Capacities of returning to God.

And beside all this, Experience would inform them, that Procrastination is a Malady seldom cur'd, that the Delays of Repentance are as usual in old Age as in Youth, and (whether such Men grow fear'd and insensible by Degrees, or are surpriz'd by Death while they are still putting the evil Day far from them) for the most part end in final Impenitency.

But if the Fear of future Punishments hath too fast an Hold upon the Conscience to be thus shaken off, there are Wiles and Devices of the Devil to cheat into Wickedness by Religion itself; he can direct all their Zeal to Matter of Pomp and Shew, such as are apt to procure a great Fame and Reputation of Godliness, and leave them at large in those Matters where they may sin with most Satisfaction to themselves, and

least open Scandal to the World. He can instruct them to build the Sepulchres of the dead Prophets, that with less Suspicion of themselves they may persecute those that are alive : He can teach them to make their Prayers long with Absurdities and vain Repetitions, that they may not be scrupulous and squeamish in devouring Widows Houses : He can move them to an exact Care and Preciseness in tything Mint and Cummin, that they may with more Security neglect Justice, Righteousness and Faith ; and if any Attempt be made to discover this Partiality and Hypocrisy, by shewing that the moral Duties are of most Weight and Consequence, that tho' the lower Duties are to be done, yet the greater must not be left undone ; he that would thus discover the Delusion and Deceit of their specious Pretences to Religion, would fare among them as our Saviour did among the *Pharisees* ; they would be full of Fury and Indignation, and brand him as a loose and prophane Man, a Destroyer of the Law, an Enemy to the Power of Godliness, and a Friend to Publicans and Sinners.

But if the Disguise of Hypocrisy put more Restraint upon a Man (tho' but in little Things, and Trifles in Comparifon) than he is willing to endure, there is a Way of Heresy which is smother and broader than that ; it is but calling the Fear of Hell, Bondage, a legal Spirit, that needless and sinful Man unacquainted with the Gospel, and the magnifying and exalting Free Grace in the Justification of every elect Sinner from all Eternity ; and what need any further Trouble to procure that Acceptance which we had with God before we were born ? How injurious are they to the Gift of God, who would put Conditions upon that which is past, which is done and compleated, and that irrevocably, without any Care or Desire of ours ? There remains nothing but that we be persuaded to believe our own Election and Justification, not as necessary to obtain the Thing, but the Comfort of it only. And
because

because such a Belief is unreasonable, and without Ground, unless all Men were so elected and justified from Eternity, or he that believes that he is in particular, assur'd of it by a Revelation from Heaven; this Objection, tho' impossible to be answer'd, may be slighted and contemn'd, as the Attempt of proud and corrupt Nature to exalt itself against Grace, as the Impudence of carnal Reason in disputing against God, as the Enmity of the natural Man to the Things that are spiritually discern'd.

But nothing so effectually debauches those who are disposed to be serious and apprehensive of another Life, as the ordinary Impostures of Schism, whereby besides the Complication of all the Mischiefs of Superstition and Hypocrisy, Men are inclin'd to estimate all Goodness and Truth according to the Humour of that Party to which they addict themselves; to make the Confederacies and Combinations of a Faction the Fellowship of good People, and the Communion of Saints; to pursue the Matter in Difference, tho' never so small in itself, with so much Eagerness, as if it were the one Thing necessary to Salvation, and the only characteristic Mark of the Children of God. From hence Government comes to be disorder'd, and the People fitted for the Impressions of every seditious Incendiary, and the Obligations of natural Affection to be easily disregarded, the Father set against the Son, and the Brother against the Sister; and Charity which is the Fulfilling of the Law, is esteem'd Lukewarmness and Indifferency to all Opinions. The schismatical Spirit will make you fast for Strife and Debate, and to strike with the Fist of Wickedness, without any Check or Controul of Conscience; it will teach them to make Contumely and Disobedience a Part of their Religion, to set God and their Rulers in Opposition one to another, that they may fulfil the Lusts of Envy or Malice, Ambition or Revenge, and please themselves all the while with the Conceit, that they are only zealous for God,

and contending on his Side with such as rise up against him ; it will embolden him to despise the wisest, and condemn the best Men as ignorant of the Mysteries of God, and notwithstanding all their Exactness in legal or moral Righteousness, are unacquainted with the true Life and Spirit of the Gospel, by which strange Presumption of themselves, and Prejudice against all but their own Party, they become most mischievous and incorrigible Apostates.

The Sum of the whole Matter is this: Where the Love of God and a Delight in his Commandments is the Principle of Obedience, that Man's Faith is built upon a Rock, able to endure the Assaults of the fiercest Tempests ; but where a Man is over-aw'd only into an unwilling Submission to God's Law, 'tis a Thousand to one but in some of the foremention'd Ways he will return to the Commission of his former Sins, and become either an open Infidel, or a superstitious Hypocrite : For without the Habit and Grace of Charity, tho' we may be affrighted into a good Beginning, there is no Security, not so much as Likelihood of Perseverance, which is the second Argument of its Worthiness and Fitness to be the main Scope and Design of the Gospel.

3. This Grace of Charity is not only a Condition of Salvation (as all others are) but it is the immediate Preparation and Disposition of the Soul for the Happiness of Heaven. All the Virtues of Justice and Prudence, Fortitude and Humility, Mortification of our inordinate Appetites and Desires, Faith, Hope, Patience and Resignation to God, are but the Trials of our Obedience and Sincerity, which God requires as the Testimonies of our Love and Reverence, and as Virtues fit and proper for this State of Imperfection and Infirmary, in which we must approve ourselves for the Kingdom of Heaven : But in a State of perfect Happiness, the Reason and Use of all these will cease, only

only Charity shall endure for ever, as that Habit of Soul in the Sincerity whereof true Holiness, and in the Perfection of which true Happiness doth consist. If we liv'd in Expectation of a *Mahometan* Paradise, and our Reward was to be in the exquisite Satisfaction of Sense, then the Life of an *Epicure* would be the best Preparation for it; by the Use and Skill of corporeal Pleasure in this Life, we should learn to enjoy it in the next with a more perfect Relish, and we need not be taught the Love of God to prepare us for green Pastures, flowry Meadows, sumptuous Banquets, and all the Entertainments the most effeminate Sensualist can fancy or desire. But the Scriptures give us such an Account of the Joys of Heaven, as have no Affinity with the Pleasures and Lusts of the Flesh, as bear no Resemblance but a direct Contradiction to the Delights of Sense. This Body shall become spiritual and immortal, not liable to Sickness or Decay, and therefore not needing the daily Reparation of Meat and Drink, or those other Provisions which this weak Estate requires: The just Men made perfect shall be as the Angels of God, and tho' we know but little of their Life and Happiness, yet thus far the Spirit of God represents the Employment and chief Delight both of the Angels and Saints, to consist in the Knowledge, Love, and Praise of God, in giving Blessing, Honour and Glory to him that sitteth on the Throne, and to the Lamb for evermore.

The Beatifical Vision of God is not beatifical as a mere Speculation, or Knowledge, tho' of the most perfect Being, but as a necessary Cause of a passionate and unspeakable Love, in which Affection directed to the most worthy Object, rais'd to the highest Degree, and maintain'd in that Degree always without Remission or Decay, all that we can imagine of perfect Happiness doth consist.

The Love of God then is the very formal Cause of the Happiness of Heaven, and the beatifical Vision is

a remoter Cause, and the Foundation from whence that Love will eternally flow : By which we see how necessary it was for this Grace to be implanted in the Hearts of Men, since without it, as the immediate Capacity of Salvation, Heaven itself could not make them happy.

And thus I have done with the Second Consideration of the Nature of Charity, how fit and worthy it is to be the End of this Commandment, or Gospel. I will conclude all in the comprehensive Words of the Author of the Book of *Wisdom*, where the greatest Part of what I have been discoursing of seems to be briefly compriz'd, *Chap. vi. The true Desire of Wisdom is the Desire of Discipline, and the Care of Discipline is Love ; and Love is the keeping of her Laws, and the giving Heed unto her Laws is the Assurance of Incorruption, and Incorruption draweth us near to God.*

To God the Father, &c.

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